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From: Navajo Nation Press Office [mailto:press@operationyellowwater.com]
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NAVAJO NATION OFFICE OF THE
PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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August 31, 2015

**ATTORNEY GENERAL BRANCH SELECTS HUESTON HENNIGAN LLP TO
REPRESENT NAVAJO NATION IN GOLD KING MINE SPILL LAWSUIT**

Window Rock - Navajo Nation Attorney General Ethel Branch announced today that she has selected the law firm of Hueston Hennigan LLP to represent the Navajo Nation in its claims relating to the release of hazardous substances from the Gold King Mine north of Silverton, Colorado. The initial release of approximately three million gallons of water contaminated by acid mine waste, including arsenic, lead, and cadmium, created a plume that traveled 215 miles through the San Juan River, one of the Navajo Nation's primary water sources.

“Mr. Hueston and his team of skilled litigators will work tirelessly to secure justice and equity for the Navajo Nation and the Navajo people as we address the aftermath of the disastrous Gold King Mine spill. The impact has been devastating to our culture and economy, as well as to the peace of mind of our people. With unknown amounts of this fine sediment in our water we now we face the risk of reliving this nightmare with every major increased water flow event affecting the river,” said Attorney General Branch.

The litigation team at Hueston Hennigan LLP will be led by John Hueston, who is most well-known for his role as lead prosecutor in the Enron trial against Ken Lay and Jeff Skilling. Most recently he represented the Navajo Nation and a number of other governments in securing the \$5.15 billion Tronox settlement, the largest environmental recovery settlement in United States history.

“My firm is fully committed to this case, and we will make this matter a number one priority. Working alongside the Attorney General of the Navajo Nation, our team will be relentless in our efforts to secure justice and fair treatment for the Navajo people,” said Mr. Hueston.

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye announced shortly after the Gold King Mine spill that the Nation would sue the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other potentially responsible parties. The Navajo Nation Department of Justice conducted a nationwide search of top litigation and environmental law firms and ultimately selected Hueston Hennigan LLP out of a group of five highly qualified finalists.

Navajo farmers and ranchers and the Navajo community in Northern Navajo have been significantly impacted by the mine spill that has shut down the San Juan River for the past three weeks. Farmers have had to abandon large portions of their fields in the hopes of salvaging limited plots, and livestock has become dehydrated due to lack of water. Many of these Navajo farms are organic farms and grow heirloom fruits and vegetables. Many Navajo families along the River also grow corn pollen and special types of corn for ceremonial purposes, but many of those crops have already dried up.

Meanwhile the over 300 abandoned hard rock mines from the Upper Animas Mining District continue to pose a threat to the Nation’s water source, and contaminated water from the Gold King Mine continues to spew forth at a rate of 610 gallons per minute—thus taking the aggregate spill amount to over 22 million gallons.

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